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August 8, 2012
AEON Environmental Foundation

Discussion on environment and relationship building by 60 college students
from Japan, China, and South Korea

First Asian Students Environment Platform 2012 starts on Friday, August 17

The Aeon Environmental Foundation (Chairman: Takuya Okada, Honorary Chairman and Advisor of Aeon Co., Ltd.; hereinafter, “the Foundation”) is pleased to announce that it will host the Asian Students Environment Platform (ASEP) for the next 10 years. The first in a series of planned annual programs will be held from Friday, August 17 to Thursday, August 23 in Tokyo, Iwate, and Kyoto prefectures. The participants composed of 60 college students from Japan, China, and South Korea, will come together to discuss and develop their ideas of environmental conservation, living in harmony with nature, and biodiversity.

At the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP 10) held in 2010 in Nagoya, Japan, the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity (2011 to 2020) was proposed as a plan under which the international community could work on biodiversity conservation. The plan was later accepted by the United Nations General Assembly. In response to the COP 10 initiatives, the Foundation exchanged memorandums with the UN Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity in which it pledged cooperation in promoting environmental education for young people as well as tree-planting projects.

The Foundation will host ASEP as part of its contribution outlined in the memorandums with the aim of supporting the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity and fostering the development of young people who will become future leaders in the area of environmental conservation. Under the theme of “Changing the Environment through Culture,” college students from Japan, China, and South Korea will gather at ASEP to attend lectures given by experts in specific fields, experience Japanese culture, and take field trips to learn about forestation programs. Through these experiences, it is hoped that the participants will develop their own ideas about living harmoniously with nature and biodiversity conservation.

In the future, the Foundation plans to open up participation in ASEP to youths in other Asian countries to enable college students from across the continent to freely exchange views and expand their thinking on environmental issues from a global perspective.

To promote the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity services, the Foundation also hosts, in alternate years, two award programs: the MIDORI Prize for Biodiversity (for international activities) and the Japan Biodiversity Prize (for domestic activities within Japan). The 2012 prize-awarding ceremony will be held in October. As Aeon’s own biodiversity conservation initiative, the Aeon Group has planted a total of 9,740,000 trees through the tree planting programs by the Foundation and the Aeon Hometown Forests Program, under which employees and customers have planted trees around its stores and offices.

The Aeon Group continues to implement a variety of measures and activities aimed at biodiversity conservation.

Program Details

1. Dates: Friday, August 17 to Thursday, August 23
2. Locations: Tokyo, Iwate, and Kyoto prefectures
3. Sponsor: The AEON Environmental Foundation
4. Co-sponsors: Tsinghua University (China), Korea University (South Korea), and Waseda University (Japan)
5. Participants: 60 students (20 each from Tsinghua University, Korea University, and Waseda University)
6. Major programs:
 - Friday, August 17 <Tokyo>: Opening ceremony, keynote speeches (Takuya Okada, Chairman of the Aeon Environmental Foundation; Kaoru Kamata, president of Waseda University; and Takeshi Hara, honorary professor of Waseda University and president of Waseda Environmental Round Table)

Saturday, August 18 <Tokyo>: Fieldwork (Shinjuku), lecture (Shiro Wakui, professor of Tokyo City University)

Sunday, August 19 <Iwate>: Fieldwork (Tanohata), commemorative tree planting, field trip to the Shiinomori forest restoration site

Monday, August 20 to Wednesday, August 22 (Iwate and Kyoto): Fieldwork (Chusonji Temple, Moutsuji Temple, Kibune-jinja Shrine, Kinkaku-ji Temple, and Kurama-dera Temple)

Thursday, August 23 (Tokyo): Presentation of accomplishments, closing ceremony

About the AEON Environmental Foundation

The Aeon Environmental Foundation was founded in 1990 to further the Basic Principles of the Aeon Group: "Pursuing peace, respecting humanity, and contributing to local communities." Since then, the Foundation has been working on tree-planting activities, resource reuse programs, supporting environmental NGOs and NPOs, and sponsoring international conferences. Seeking to ensure that the people of today pass on a green and healthy planet to future generations, the Foundation will continue to engage in a variety of activities that promote biodiversity conservation.

More information on the AEON Environmental Foundation is available on the web: <http://www.aeon.info/ef/>

AEON's Measures for Biodiversity Conservation

Based on the Aeon Sustainability Principle and Aeon Biodiversity Principle of 2010, the Aeon Group carries out a variety of activities related to biodiversity conservation.

(1) Tree-planting programs

In cooperation with national and municipal governments, the Aeon Environmental Foundation carries out tree-planting programs both within and outside Japan to restore forests damaged by natural disasters and other adverse events. In fiscal 2012, we planted trees in Indonesia, Hokkaido's Mukawa area, and Nanyo in Yamagata, and more tree-planting programs are scheduled for Chita in Aichi, Nanyo in Nagasaki, and Kihoku in Mie, as well as Vietnam and China.

Since the launch of the Aeon Hometown Forests Program in 1991, the Aeon Group has hosted tree-planting events whenever a new store or facility is opened, inviting local residents to help us plant saplings in the immediate vicinity of the site.

(2) The MIDORI Prize for Biodiversity

The MIDORI Prize for Biodiversity was launched in 2010 to coincide with the UN's International Year of Biodiversity and the holding of COP 10 in Nagoya, Japan. (It was also the year the Aeon Environmental Foundation celebrated its 20th anniversary.) The prize aims to support the further development of measures taken throughout the world for biodiversity conservation and to raise awareness of the importance of biodiversity.

In 2010, the first year of the prize, three individuals who made tremendous contributions to the conservation of global biodiversity and healthy ecosystems were recognized. In addition, German Chancellor Angela Merkel received the Special MIDORI Prize for Biodiversity. In 2012, the second year of the prize, the MIDORI award program will be conducted in cooperation with the UN Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

(3) Aeon Cheers Club

Aeon Cheers Club was launched in 1996 to support the healthy development of children. Today, about 6,000 children belonging to 400 clubs nationwide participate in environmental activities hosted locally by Aeon stores. For each year of the six-year cycle, the club members study issues related to a specific theme, such as waste treatment and recycling, while also developing socialization skills through the group activities.

In July 2012, a total of 233 children from 50 clubs participated in national meetings held in Okinawa and Hokkaido. Through activities including presenting their own initiatives as well as undertaking outdoor fieldwork, the participants thought about and discussed environmental issues with other club members from different parts of the country.